

Last year the United States Secret Service conducted a study of targeted violence in our Nation's schools. They found that most of the time, the person who planned the violence told someone before the attack. In almost every case, the individual displayed some behavior that caused others to be concerned. We all have a duty to watch for and report troubling signs.

The evil that destroys and the good that saves are equally real. Both can be taught. Both can be learned. All order in our society begins in the souls of citizens. Character is often shaped or bent early in life. In every family and in every school, we must teach our children to know and choose the good, to teach values that defeat violence, to teach good kids—kids to respect one another, to do unto others, the meaning of love.

Our first response to evil must be justice; yet a part of us is never satisfied by justice alone. We must search for more—for understanding and healing beyond punishment. Faith tells us that all wrongs are righted and all suffering redeemed. But that faith is tested, especially for those of you with empty chairs at home. Hardest of all is the loss of the children, of the lives taken so soon after they were given.

I hope it helps to remember that we are never closer to God than when we grieve. Faith is tested in suffering. And faith is often born in suffering, for that is when we seek the hope we most need; that is when we awaken to the greatest hope there is; that is when we look beyond our lives to the hour when God will wipe away every tear, and death will be swallowed up in victory.

On this Earth, tragedy may come even on a warm spring day, but tragedy can never touch eternity. This is where they were last, but beyond the Gates of Time lie a life eternal and a love everlasting. You in Oklahoma City are victims of tragedy and witnesses to hope. You have overcome evil, and you have suffered with courage. And for that, your Nation is grateful.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. on the lawn at the Oklahoma City National Memorial. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Don Nickles; Gov. Frank Keating of Oklahoma; Mayor Kirk Humphreys of Oklahoma City; Robert M.

Johnson, chair, and Richard Williams, member, Board of Trustees, Oklahoma City National Memorial; and Jeannine Gist and Major Ed Hill, members, Board of Directors, Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion on Education in Columbus, Ohio

February 20, 2001

[Principal Maria J. Stockard welcomed guests and introduced the roundtable participants.]

The President. Thank you, Maria. Maria, thanks very much for your hospitality. I thank all the people that are on your staff that accommodated this horde of folks that travel with me. [Laughter] And I hope we haven't been too disruptive, but it's an honor to be here.

First, I want to say thanks to my friend, the Governor. It's good to see you again, Bob. I appreciate your hard work here. I want to thank the congressional delegation that traveled with me: the Senator, two Congressmen—other than Congressman Pat Tiberi from this district. Deborah Pryce and Dave Hobson came down on the plane with us, and I appreciated our discussion, and thanks for your time, both of you. And thank you, Mike, as well, for being here. I want to thank my friends the Wexners for being here.

One of the things we saw was a program of mentors. And it's a good way to lead into the strength of an accountability system and what it means, because a mentor is really not very effective unless there is a need identified. I mean, what we need to use mentors for and a host program for is to combine the love of our citizenry with enabling children to learn to read, in this case, by identifying problems.

One of the things that I'm insisting that the Congress enact is a law that says that if you receive Federal money, you, the State, or the local jurisdiction must measure to show us whether or not children are learning. The heart of education reform is accountability. The heart of making sure every child learns and no child is left behind is accountability. Because how do you know if you don't measure? How can you possibly judge

whether or not a child is learning to read and write and add and subtract unless we know?

A system that refuses to be held accountable is a system that shuffles children through. And guess who gets shuffled through? In my State, oftentimes children whose parents didn't speak English as a first language, inner-city children. It's so much easier to walk into a room and say, "Oh, these kids aren't supposed to learn. Let's just move them through. It'll be okay. Somewhere along the line something positive may happen." That's unacceptable to me, and I think it's beginning to be unacceptable to America. I know it's unacceptable to Rosa.

I got to know Rosa last summer when I was in your school district, and she knows what I know, that good education starts with high standards and the unfailing belief that every child can learn, regardless of their background or their circumstances; secondly, that local control of schools is paramount to change and excellence. It's important to empower the superintendents, like Rosa. She knows what I know, a great principal of a school is going to make an enormous difference as to whether or not children learn. One of the reasons we picked this school is because of Maria's guidance and leadership.

But also, the cornerstone of reform and the need to make sure we meet the national goal of no child being left behind, is to test. I'm unalterably opposed to a national test. Any kind of national test would undermine local curriculum and local control of schools. But I do believe it makes sense and is right to ask the question: If you receive Federal money, what are the results for the money spent? I know that some say, "Well, testing is punishment." No, testing is a diagnostic tool, necessary to correct problems early, before it's too late.

Later on, I'll be in St. Louis, Missouri, today, and I'm going to talk about a reading initiative that will start at the Head Start Program. But in order to make sure any reading initiative or any math initiative that takes place is effective, we must measure. And we must make sure that children, by the way, all start at the same spot, at the same starting point, in order for the accountability systems to make sense.

I think it's fundamentally—well, I know it's fundamentally important to ask the question, "What works?" Particularly, "Will, the host program work?" How do you know if you don't measure?

When we ask the question, "What works?"—Rosa asks that question all the time here in the Columbus School District. And the feedback she gets from accountability system will help determine not theory but the practicality of good curriculum and teacher training programs and giving students the necessary language skills to be able to succeed in our society.

So I'm here to talk about accountability as the cornerstone for the kinds of reforms that will empower local folks to make necessary decisions. One of the key components of any accountability system is there must be a consequence. If there is success, there must be a consequence. Often times, the best success, as these local educators will tell you, is to have a parent walk up—like our good parent here, Brenda—and say, "Thanks for what you're doing. You saved my son," or "You saved my daughter." That's the best feedback. But I also believe there needs to be bonus plans, and my budget will include some notion for bonuses for districts that succeed.

However, if we find failure, there must be a consequence. And I believe that districts ought to be given—those who received Federal money ought to be given a reasonable period of time to correct problems. And there needs to be some intermediate help to help districts correct problems.

But at some point in time there has to be a final moment. At some point in time we've got to say, "Failure is unacceptable." We believe every child can learn, and since every child isn't learning, something else must happen. And I believe the best program is that which empowers local districts, empowers us to make different choices if the children are mired in mediocrity and failure.

I'm excited about the progress I've seen being made on our public school reform in Washington, DC. It starts with the understanding that Washington is not the fount of all knowledge. As a matter of fact, we're going to pass power back out of Washington to empower people at the local level. But

it's important for us to have that national goal of every child being educated and the best public school system ever possible on the face of the Earth. And that's a goal both Republicans and Democrats, and those who don't care about any political party, can agree on.

And we're making progress, and I look forward to working with Members on both sides of the aisle to put the most important cornerstone of reform in place, and that's accountability.

Someone who is not afraid of being held accountable because she's got an unbelievably positive record and a positive spirit and a great attitude is the superintendent of schools right here in Columbus, Ohio, Dr. Rosa Smith.

[Superintendent Rosa Smith welcomed the President and Mrs. Bush and briefly described the Columbus schools accountability system, noting that students were assessed every 9 weeks.]

President Bush. Thank you, Rosa. As I mentioned, I had the honor of meeting Rosa last summer, and to show you how powerful she is, she said, "You need to appoint Dr. Rod Paige to become Secretary of Education." *[Laughter]* Well, 6 months later, I did. *[Laughter]*

[Ms. Stockard introduced veteran reading teacher Maisie Glover, who gave her perspective on the effectiveness of assessment as a resourceful tool to help students succeed.]

President Bush. I think that's important for people to hear. The assessment system is never meant to punish; it is meant to provide a useful tool to both teacher and specialists and principals and superintendents to determine what works.

There's a lot of discussion about parental involvement in schools. There is nothing that will make a parent more involved than to know whether or not his or her child is learning. One of the things that in my State I did when I was the Governor was encourage there to be open transparency when it came to performance. So everybody knew—so everybody was aware of whether or not their school—a lot of parents think their school is doing just fine, until the results are posted.

And we've got a parent here that I can't wait for you all to hear from. *[Laughter]* I got an earful behind the scenes—*[laughter]*—a positive earful. *[Laughter]* Tell us your story, Brenda.

[Brenda Seffrin stated that parents must be held accountable also, and she described how her learning-disabled child had progressed after she enrolled him in Ms. Stockard's school.]

The President. You were going to tell me something? *[Laughter]* Don't panic—

Ms. Seffrin. Why are you putting me on the spot? *[Laughter]*

The President. Join the club. *[Laughter]*

Ms. Stockard. She indicated that she had several questions written—

Ms. Seffrin. Well, I just was wondering if you could recommend any programs for our school to help encourage children—and this is for you, too—to write books, as well as read books. If there was anything that we could do.

The President. My recommendation is you tell Maria that. *[Laughter]*

Ms. Seffrin. Okay. *[Laughter]*

The President. The truth of the matter is, the best way to achieve objectives is to empower people at the local level to make those decisions. That's why a good principal, like Maria, will encourage parental involvement, so she gets feedback from what parents would like to see their children doing.

Part of the problem is Washington. People look at Washington and say, "Well, we've got all the answers up there." And the truth of the matter is, we don't, particularly when it comes to education. We may be able to provide some funding, so long as that funding is not so prescriptive that it hamstring the ability for people to make decisions necessary—because I can assure you the schools in Columbus, Ohio, are really different from Laredo, Texas. The children are—they're to be loved, but we've got different challenges in different parts of the country. And that is why flexibility is important. And that's why specific programs that you'd like to see incorporated in the schools ought to be taken to the principal and not to some distant land called Washington, DC.

[Ms. Stockard introduced Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio, who said the report of the State's Commission on Student Success, concerning how Ohio could achieve the best possible system of high standards, assessment, and accountability, aligned with the President's proposals and had support from Ohio legislators.]

The President. I appreciate that, Governor. Thanks, I—the Governor recognized legislators who will decide the fate of the program. I need to do the same thing. [Laughter] One of the things chief executives in government know: We get to propose; we just don't get to write the law. We occasionally get to veto law, but we don't get to write it.

There's a lot of pressure on Members from a couple of fronts. One is the no-testing crowd, based upon there's no role for government. I strongly disagree, and I hope you agree with me, because we need to be results-oriented people. All we're asking is, is it working? What are the results?

There's another segment of our society, the no-testing crowd saying, "All they do is teach the test." Well, just ask Brenda what it's like to see her son get taught how to read, who then was able to pass the literacy test.

There's a group of folks that'll say, "You can't test because it's racist." What's racist is not testing. What's racist, it seems like to me, is giving up on kids, just move them through and hope we get it right—and hope we get it right. One of the most profound statements I heard was from a lady in Houston who was the reading czarina from the Houston Independent School District, who worked for Rod, named Phyllis Hunter. She said, "Reading is the new civil right." That's a pretty powerful statement when you think about it.

The fate of the program that I've submitted depends upon Members of the United States Congress, and you've elected a good one from the Columbus area named Tiberi—sitting right up here. Are you with me, Pat? [Laughter] Not to put any pressure on you. [Laughter] Just teasing.

Representative Patrick J. Tiberi. What do you think, Deborah? Sorry. [Laughter] Do I have the stage? [Laughter]

The President. Yes, you do. You've got the vote, and you've got the stage.

[Representative Tiberi complimented the President for his passion on the issue of education reform and stressed that all sectors should participate, not just the Federal Government.]

The President. That means yes. [Laughter] Smart man, holding out to negotiate. [Laughter] Thanks for traveling with us, Pat.

Representative Tiberi. Thank you.

The President. I am passionate on the subject. I can't think of a more noble goal than to make sure every child is educated. And it's going to happen. You see, the systems in the past have viewed kind of mass migrations of students through, and one of the things that an accountability-oriented system will do is, we start judging each child on his or her individual merit.

One of the keys to success—and I think we're going to get this out of Congress, by the way, and I hope the members of the legislature support the Governor on this—is to do what they call disaggregating results. When you measure, you must measure on a child-by-child basis. Think about what the reform means, that when we start viewing—saying each child matters and we're going to track each child based upon his or her progress, it starts to provide the catalyst for ultimate change, which is a system that slowly, surely evolves away from the mass migration of students through schools to tailoring programs to meet an individual's needs.

The mentoring program that The Limited has put in place is the beginnings of a system that is able to focus on a child on a one-to-one basis. Rosa says that they assess each child's progress on a 9-week basis. That says we're first asking the question, what about this particular child? In the past, accountability systems that really weren't holding people accountable would just lump people into an overall group.

And so I want to applaud the members of the Ohio Legislature for being willing to think about how to encourage reform within the system.

There's a lot of debate about school choice, and there should be. That's fine. But the cornerstone for reform is accountability, ultimately, giving parents, if need be, depending on whether the State likes it or not, the opportunity to make a different choice.

That's up to the State. As far as I'm concerned, if a district receives Federal money, and that school won't teach and won't change, then at some point in time that money should not go to continue to fuel failure.

And one option is charters, and one option is school choice, but another option is private tutoring or private schools. But that's—and the Congress is going to wrestle with that issue. But the whole reason I'm here today is to remind people that the true agent for reform is accountability and be willing to measure on a child-by-child basis, and then correct on a child-by-child basis, where correction is needed. And you watch what happens in America.

The spirit of reform, and as Pat said, the willingness for people to discuss this issue in an open way is going to really reinvigorate the public schools. And to say to our teachers, loud and clear, "We love you for teaching," and to say to our principals, "Thanks for being the catalysts, the educational entrepreneurs we need," to herald the great superintendents around the country that are making a major difference, that's what this is all about.

And this is something our country must achieve and will achieve. And it's not going to come out of the Federal Government. We're just a small part of it. But one thing the President can do is to continue talking about this issue until we get it right. And that's exactly what I'm going to do.

[Ms. Stockard then described how her students colored simple bar graphs to chart their own progress toward specific goals throughout the school year. Mrs. Bush discussed the impact and value of teachers to the Nation, and said she hopes to attract young people to the profession.]

The President. Brenda, have you got anything else you want to say, now that you're warmed up? *[Laughter]*

Ms. Seffrin. No, but thank you for being here. It really meant a lot.

The President. Well, thanks. We're delighted.

Well, what do you think, Gov?

Governor Taft. I think you've got Congressman Tiberi's vote. *[Laughter]* Senator

DeWine is looking very supportive back there.

The President. He is supportive.

Governor Taft. And Congresswoman Pryce as well. I think that she looks supportive. I think you're making some headway. And I just want to say this, we really appreciate the fact that you have come to Ohio to highlight your education program.

The President. It's a great State.

Governor Taft. Really, your first domestic trip outside of Washington. We're honored.

The President. Well, thanks. It's a great State, and it seems like every time I come to Columbus, I'm coming to another school. That's a great testimony to the school district. And for those in Columbus who don't realize this, actually I've got some roots here. My grandfather was raised in Columbus, Ohio. Yes, Prescott S. Bush. So we're proud of the city and really appreciate the hospitality always shown when we come here.

Thanks very much for having us. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The roundtable began at 10:42 a.m. in Room 19/20 at Sullivant Elementary School. In his remarks, the President referred to Representatives Deborah Pryce and David L. Hobson; Senator Mike DeWine; and Les Wexner, State chairman, Business Leadership Council for OhioReads.

Remarks on the Robert Hanssen Espionage Case

February 20, 2001

This has been a difficult day for those who love our country, and especially for those who serve our country in law enforcement and in the intelligence community.

Allegations of espionage of an FBI counterintelligence agent are extremely serious and are deeply disturbing, particularly disturbing for the thousands of men and women who work for the FBI, whose mission is to protect our national security and who now must deal with allegations that one of their own may have undermined it.

I have the utmost confidence in Director Louis Freeh and the men and women who serve in the FBI, those who represent our